The long and winding road. A challenge to ICOMOS Members
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Abstract.
This paper reflects upon the development of conservation practice—the long and winding road from Venice to Burra and beyond—the evolution of modern heritage conservation. It contends that just as conservation theory has evolved to conserve places where heritage values are defined not solely by expert analysis of fabric but dynamically, through recognising intangible and community values, so too must heritage conservation practice now evolve to face changing social and economic contexts which demand diverse, contemporary tools that demonstrate the sustainability benefits of heritage conservation.

It suggests that conservation practice needs to re-focus in the context of global social changes: the revolution in communications; the impacts of corporate decisions and mass tourism on heritage sites. To re-focus, not away from ICOMOS fundamental philosophy and principles, but into providing an updated toolkit for how heritage values and places can be conserved, presented and managed sustainably. Is this a potential role for the ICOMOS Scientific Council?

Using the Sydney Opera House as a case study the paper illustrates a new framework for conservation and development decisions about heritage impacts and the development of practical management policies that will retain and sustain heritage values, for a heritage place whose Outstanding Universal Value is as an architectural monument and also as an active performing arts centre.

1.0 Introduction

The opportunities presented by the ICOMOS Scientific Council symposium to engage directly with so many diverse minds, cultures, personal and professional experiences are such a temptation! How appropriate that we meet in Ireland, a nation whose people have looked outward for centuries, adapting, enriching and enlivening the far corners of the world to the tin whistle tune of 80 million descendants. For it is outward that ICOMOS must also look to re-assess the evolving economic and social context of our work and to reflect upon the relevance of our current practice and priorities of our organisation.

After more that three decades of active engagement with ICOMOS nationally and internationally, I’m encouraged and challenged by the call to arms of ICOMOS President Gustavo Araoz to be part of an international ICOMOS reflection on new heritage paradigms and to consider what the role of ISC’s and the Scientific Council might be.

This reflection has been recently stimulated by the conference held in the Czech Republic in May 2010 by the ICOMOS Scientific Committee on Theory and Philosophy, which opened debate on President Araoz’s paper, and I will draw today on aspects of the perspectives which I presented to that meeting.

Here in Dublin, I would like to briefly travel down the long and winding road from the Venice Charter to the Burra Charter, to Nara and beyond and reflect upon the evolution, opportunities and challenges of current conservation practice. For me, this requires a re-focus not away from fundamental philosophies but towards an emphasis on excellence in communication and presentation of heritage principles and tools through a diversity of contemporary media.
I will close with a case study about the Sydney Opera House, to illustrate a possible new tool for the ICOMOS toolkit, the concept of assessing sensitivity or “tolerance for change”, a tool developed in recent Conservation Management Plans. I must stress at the outset that I use the term “tolerance” in its engineering sense of “limited allowance”: a permissible difference; the freedom to move within limits of variation. The alternative term “sensitivity to change” may translate better into other languages and cultural contexts.

2.0 The Road from Venice to Burra

2.1 POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

In the post war period, the Venice Charter (1965) provided influential direction, processes and principles for heritage reconstruction. It aimed to inform the actions of governments and institutions facing the vast challenges of rebuilding the historic cities, towns and cultural institutions of Europe. At that time, repairing the damaged building fabric and landscapes which held the cultural and institutional memory and the very identity of nations was of great importance to post-war physical and psychological recovery. The Venice Charter laid down evaluative processes for heritage practice, moving beyond the dominance of the individual curator/decision maker and promoting a multi-disciplinary approach to historical evidence.

Nevertheless, post-war reconstruction in Europe swept away much original building fabric and layers of evidence which, in less urgent times, or with different resources available, may have been conserved. Indeed, Leo Schmidt describes the first two decades after the war as a “second destruction”, citing Dresden as an extreme example of the loss of historic urban structure in the quest for a car-friendly city.

2.2 POST-WAR URBANISATION

In Asia, post-war recovery often also coincided with a postcolonial political urge for new national identity. Building booms, unleashed after the lifting of war-time austerity, brought with them the rapid destruction of metropolitan fabric and the establishment of urban fringe landscapes. Factors such as the dramatic shift of population from rural to urban living, increasing urban density, general industrial recovery, broader urban wealth, rising private car ownership and the requirements of larger floor plates for commercial buildings all placed unforgiving demands on the morphology and historic urban landscape of virtually every major city. Decisions about “the things we want to keep” reflected a need to establish national approaches to the interpretation of indigenous and non-indigenous heritage places.

In many nations, resident action groups and professional organisations rallied to oppose the loss of places, monuments and sites through the 1970s and 1980s. Europa Nostra, National Trusts, Landmark Registers, Main Street programmes, land claims, green bans and resident action groups large and small voiced community demands for more balanced development.

Eventually, heritage legislation saw the protection and listing of major indigenous and non-indigenous heritage monuments and sites by the state in many nations, responding to the international leadership shown in the operation of the World Heritage Convention, 1972. ICOMOS’s world heritage role as an Advisory Body demanded expert knowledge and intellectual rigour, and as a volunteer-based NGO, the strength of its early relationships with academic institutions and major government departments provided essential support and gravitas.

2.3 FROM MANAGEMENT BY THE STATE AND SPECIALISTS TO COMMUNITY JUDGEMENTS OF ASSOCIATION AND MEANING

In many countries the 1980s and 1990s saw the rapid growth of what Robert Hewison has termed “the heritage industry”. Abruptly, the world of economics and finance entered heritage practice in Australia (as it had in the UK), as public policy explicitly adopted a strong market orientation.

Hewison felt that heritage had become commodified; packaged and sold as sites for consumption to the rapidly expanding mass tourism and leisure sectors. Conversely, many site managers felt that these very processes were simply “bringing the past back to life” The demands of commercial marketing began to pressure the judgements of institutionally based advisers on the management of respected major public and religious buildings and archaeological sites.
In the UK and in Australia, Government planning departments staffed by specialists implementing heritage legislation rapidly expanded and professional heritage consultancy firms emerged to service the private sector heritage owner. Leo Schmidt identifies similar staffing shifts occurring in Europe at that time.

In Australia, the heritage values of a very broad range of heritage site types were being identified through historically informed and thematic heritage surveys throughout the 1970s and 80s. Public and private heritage sites alike were being regulated by state or local government authorities, backed by public funding resources.

But by the turn of the twenty-first century, the broadening scope of heritage work meant that available public funds usually didn’t match the scope of the survey and heritage management tasks: regulation incentives had dwindled and taxation incentives had disappeared. In many Australian jurisdictions political support for heritage diminished and, as the regulatory processes were reviewed and reviewed again, statutory controls were reduced. Once more, many communities are forming resident action groups and taking to the barricades once again to fight development that threatens heritage places as statutory protection wanes.

2.4 COMMUNITY VALUES: AN OPEN-ENDED PROCESS

Gradually, but with different timeframes internationally, the role of community stakeholders has become more prominent in identifying and effectively selecting heritage places with local meanings and associations. In the UK, the National Trust noted that determining what was “significance was no longer the preserve of the expert, but involved the shared judgment of everyone with a stake or interest”.

In Asia, the *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China*, commonly known as the *China Principles* also asserts that while heritage values are inherent, our understanding of them can change through recognition and awareness of different cultures. “Recognition of the sites heritage values is a continuous and open-ended process that deepens as society develops and its scientific and cultural awareness increases.”

World Heritage listings such as Hiroshima (1996), Robben Island (1999) and the Mostar Bridge (2005) also reflected the shifting acceptance of the contribution of intangible values in significance assessment: “the implementation of the World Heritage Convention can be characterized as evolving from a more materials based approach towards a greater emphasis on intangible values”, noted Christina Cameron at the ICOMOS General Assembly (GA) in 2008.

Philosophically, there has also been recognition that heritage is a concept in time and cultural context to be continually re-visited and re-defined. Debates around the definition of “authenticity” (and most recently that of “integrity”) have been of particular importance in Asia.

2.5 ASIA AND AUTHENTICITY

By the 1990s, the relevance and appropriateness of the Venice Charter’s practical implementation in Asia was being very politely questioned. European practices such as anastylosis were not so relevant in countries with centuries of wooden building tradition, where maintenance and replacement/renewal actively maintained revered intangible traditional building skills and techniques as well as ceremonial portent. Conservation practice in temples in Japan reflected the cultural necessity to regularly renew or ritually revitalize the spiritual power and presence of the place, and the implied value of the fabric of the building was thus also different.

In 1994 the need to recognize the authenticity of multiple sources and voices in identifying heritage values was raised at a major international meeting in Nara, culminating in the *Nara Document on Authenticity*. This sought to identify the close relationship between heritage values and cultural identity: relationships that were diverse and mutually enriching and founded in the authenticity or truthfulness of a variety of information sources including functional uses, skills and spiritual traditions, as well as documentation and building fabric.
At the 2002 Madrid GA of ICOMOS Andrzej Tomaszewski astutely noted that:

“a deep divide became visible between two philosophical-methodological approaches:

• the European conception of authenticity of the monument, seen entirely in terms of authenticity of substance and derived directly from the Roman-Christian cult of Holy Relics, and

• the Far Eastern conception seen in terms of authenticity of form, function and tradition, derived from a belief in reincarnation.

“The first concept was reflected in the work of western conservation theoreticians, the second reflected local building traditions, sometimes even codified in modern building laws.

“This controversy, having a concrete practical source in the creation of the World Heritage List, caused—after decades of sterility of conservation theorising—a great and lively intellectual discussion.”

But where has that lively discussion led? Today, the Nara Document is duly acknowledged, and the test of authenticity is carefully assessed in current world heritage nomination dossiers, although the issues around the concept of integrity have yet to be fully explored and integrated.

The Florence Charter (1981) and the Vernacular Charter (1999) also opened discussions about issues with universal resonance, questioning the transitory nature of the significance of fabric and the critical impact of intergenerational transfer on integrity and authenticity. But where did those debates flow? What new tools were developed and distributed by ICOMOS?

On the ICOMOS website today we have 12 ICOMOS charters dating from 1968 to 2008 (8 of which are more than 10 years old) and 11 ICOMOS resolutions/declarations dating from 1972–2005 (all but one are more than twelve years old) and a range of local and national documents (only two of which have been prepared within the last 5 years). Do these documents represent a lively debate? Do they comprise a cogent or contemporary ICOMOS toolkit? Or do we need to move on?

Lest panic ensue, rest assured that I am NOT suggesting ICOMOS abandon its heritage of charters and declarations, but…. Is it time to synthesise the advances of these philosophical debates into new resources for the ICOMOS toolkit? Is this a challenge and an opportunity for every ISC and for the Scientific Council?

3.0 A New Decade: Time to Re-focus?

In recent times we have celebrated 40 years of ICOMOS, 25 years of the Burra Charter and already UNESCO is gearing up for the celebrate 40 years of the World Heritage Convention in 2012. ICOMOS can be justly proud of its legacy at national and international levels. But what of the future?

In the last few years the world has experienced a global financial crisis (GFC) of unparalleled impact. The GFC has caused us all to re-evaluate our personal futures and financial habits and governments everywhere have reviewed expenditure and investment priorities.

At the close of the first decade of a new century, many countries face a new shared international context, with the reduction of national government sovereignty in economic and planning decisions which are impacting on their futures.

3.1 CHANGING TIMES

Three seemingly unstoppable forces are driving these social changes:

a) International capital decisions

The intensification of the globalisation of capital means that development and property management decisions, which are non-national in their interest and outcomes but impactful on heritage places, are often more complex than national sovereignty issues (let alone local management) due to the macroeconomic repercussions of refusal or constraint. Recent cases of multi-national-driven large new buildings in the historic urban landscapes of cities like London, St Petersburg, Beijing and Vienna demonstrate the power of global capital forces and the difficulty of management faced by many world heritage cities.
b) The communication revolution
The communication revolution of the Web 2.0 has swiftly changed most processes of daily communication. The exchange of data, ideas, principles and visuals is performed on an instant and international level as never before. The age of web wisdom represents a unique change of intergenerational knowledge transfer. ICOMOS has only recently started to use blogs and internet forum dialogue to develop philosophical and practical positions, preferring instead the traditional, familiar, but slower conference/declaration/charter communication route. This effectively excludes us from pertinent communication with new generations who activate social media daily.

c) Mass tourism
Mass tourism now impacts on cultural heritage management practice in every corner of the world, with new cultural tourism and ecotourism ventures developing and subsiding daily, as the latest “new destination” is blogged overnight. Too often sites are heritage listed or promoted without preparation for the tourism onslaught that will follow their celebrity, and the sustainability of the very heritage values for which the site was listed may be threatened or even destroyed.

In the UK, heritage has been strategically repositioned as core government business, a move which is underpinned by impressive statistical analyses that demonstrate increasing visitor numbers to historic properties despite the credit crunch. Tourism is now the UK’s fifth largest industry, with heritage tourism contributing 4.36 billion pounds to GDP, (comparable to the film, motor vehicle and advertising industries of the UK). Considerable intelligence and expense has been applied to establishing the statistics around heritage visitation and economic contribution, delivering well-reasoned data for heritage practitioners and investors.

d) Politicisation of World Heritage Convention
In the last two decades we have also watched the increasing politicisation of World Heritage Convention (WHC) processes. Indeed, the shift from expert representation to the pressures of politically motivated inscriptions recognises that the economic and community outcomes of listing are more blatantly obvious in the WHC meetings today than ever before. The recent ICOMOS report on the World Heritage Committee meeting in Brasilia noted:

“that the frequency of occurrences where the Committee’s decisions diverged from the recommendations of the Advisory Bodies was noted by many observer State Parties in attendance and was the subject of discussions throughout the session. For some, the cumulative weight of these decisions seemed to imply a desire on the part of the Committee for fewer rigors in demonstrating Outstanding Universal Value, as well as greater leniency concerning the protective structures that the World Heritage Operation Guidelines require to be in place prior to inscription in the World Heritage List”.

It is admirable that ICOMOS stands firm to the scientific nature of the Convention processes, as we must at all levels. It is my observation that the politicisation of heritage decisions is the same at national, state and local level. Heritage values emerge a poor second to economic demands in so many cases.

3.2 A NEW PARADIGM?
President Gustavo’s challenge of defining a “new heritage paradigm” is therefore very pertinent to ICOMOS members. We should personally reflect upon our own professional role in the changing economic and social context of our respective countries and professions and ask, perhaps, why isn’t heritage conservation always seen as an important factor in political decisions about economic development?

- Have we focussed too much on getting the science right without effectively presenting heritage values to stakeholders and communities?
- Have we failed to respond to the need to reposition cultural heritage in the context of economic globalisation?
- Are we failing to present and communicate heritage issues effectively in contemporary media?

In my opinion the social and economic context of heritage conservation has changed dramatically and this is a good time to reconsider ICOMOS priorities. Not away from our fundamental ICOMOS objectives, philosophy and attention to our science, but diverting some serious attention into how we deliver heritage conservation messages to keep heritage prominent and relevant.

And the subject of our forthcoming GA—sustainability—is the perfect focus for us to consider:
• Are the existing ICOMOS charters, guidelines and principles, created in such
different times, still useful and relevant for international conservation practice
today? Or is it time for ISCs to review them?
• Has the resistance to changing documents such as the Venice Charter and the
resulting plethora of subject-specific charters and guidelines confused
conservation practice and limited its progress? Has it led to lively discussion or
polarised positions?
• Are there other discipline-specific or regionally based tools that we can share and
adapt? How can ICOMOS be that centre for intellectual exchange and
documentation?

These are questions that ICOMOS as an organization, as well as each of us as individuals
must face and answer to remain relevant as leaders in cultural heritage conservation and
management.

A relatively easy answer could be for the Scientific Council to invest in and vigorously
promote ICOMOS’s objective in constantly gathering and sharing new methodology and
approaches to conservation practice, accessible information, open debate and leadership,
through symposia such as this, such vital work being promulgated by the ICOMOS
Documentation Centre.

A second priority could be collecting, developing heritage tools and making them
electronically accessible to practitioners, communities and audiences.

The shift from the traditional emphasis on the preservation of fabric by technical experts to
the recognition of a range of community voices in the conservation process has been
accompanied by the increased recognition of the importance of interpretation and
presentation of heritage places (although those very words are contested by some).

Interpreting the meanings, associations and stories of diverse communities through
positive, negative and multi-cultural voices becomes the challenge: not simply presenting
history or aesthetics through ‘authoritative’ discourse or academic treatise. The 2008
ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites is a
seminal contribution to this work and an essential component of the heritage toolkit in
engaging communities with heritage places and concepts. The ICIPs website features a
blog and a case study. An illustrated version of its charter is in development.

Thirdly ICOMOS generally needs to focus on the role of heritage and sustainability.

We can observe the development and early implementation of the English Heritage
Principles of Conservation, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the
Historic Environment. This is surely one of the most ambitious and comprehensive heritage
management documents of our time.

The Principles defines conservation as “the process of managing change to a significant
place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising
opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations”
(Principle 4).

It goes on to wisely state that “sustainable management of a place begins with
understanding and defining how, why, and to what extent it has cultural and natural heritage
values: in sum, its significance. Communicating that significance to everyone concerned
with a place, particularly those whose actions may affect it, is then essential if all are to act
in awareness of its heritage values” (Principle 24).

In my opinion, this is the way forward and the Principles is a seminal document for everyone
involved in heritage conservation. Congratulations are due to English Heritage and the
many participants who evolved the document.

4. The Capacity of ICOMOS to Deliver Change

4.1. COMMUNICATION MECHANISMS

It’s not enough to be an expert anymore. It’s not enough to cherish and publish charters; we
need to communicate heritage values to generation Y and X decision-makers who live their
lives through YouTube, Facebook, SMS and Twitter. We need to invest in implementing an
ICOMOS Communications Strategy that will reach the new generations of decision-makers
with heritage messages.
4.2 COMMUNICATION MESSAGES
As individuals, we need to promote and re-focus heritage conservation messages as an integrated part of sustainable resource use and development, not as an end in itself. This is a fundamental shift for some of us, a slight inflection for others.

4.3 ORGANISATIONAL FLEXIBILITY
The ability of ICOMOS, as an international organisation, to be willing to review its own practices and to actively review existing practice, share and develop new tools to meet these challenges is thus of crucial importance to our discussions.

The length of time it takes for ICOMOS to develop and verify charters almost guarantees they will be out of date by the time they are approved. We need to speed the plough!

By way of example, I note that three key aspects of conservation practice have been useful in sustaining organisational flexibility in ICOMOS Australia, which may have equally useful application at an international level.

4.3.1 Regular review of practice and process
The first key aspect is a strong belief that in the future, regular review and revision of the Burra Charter would be essential, so that practice continually informs policy. This belief flowed consistently from the first Burra Charter in 1981, into the many hundreds of surveys, Conservation Plans and Significance Assessments for Australian heritage places which the Burra Charter has guided, most of which contain policies requiring review within a 5-year period. In this way policies, practice and significance is regularly reviewed by new minds with new information and contexts.

4.3.2 Membership Commitment to ethical practice
The second key aspect is an agreed ethical approach toward each other and to heritage.

Australia ICOMOS requires all its members to agree to “practice within” the Burra Charter and, since 2002, to practice in accordance with the international ICOMOS Ethical Commitment Statement for ICOMOS Members adopted at the Madrid GA in 2002.

The concept of ICOMOS members committing to specific common principles is also relatively rare; indeed the Ethical Commitment Statement represents the first attempt to nominate a holistic philosophical relationship between practice and ethical principles for ICOMOS members. It is one of the few items of ICOMOS doctrine that has universal application and the only ICOMOS doctrine to include a regular review clause (and it can indeed be modified by the ICOMOS Executive Committee at any time).

4.3.3 Sharing the Knowledge in the ICOMOS network
A third key aspect of Australian conservation practice that has been beneficial is the sharing of tools and methods swiftly and generously. Each of us will have locally adapted tools that we use daily, but if not, let’s not reinvent wheels, let’s share them. The URLs for the documents I have mentioned are in my endnotes and the ICOMOS Documentation Centre blog site is an ideal location for sharing more examples amongst members.

Indeed, I’d like to see an ICOMOS toolkit section on our website: for example, the disaster preparedness manuals members use; the volunteer register approaches; and the lessons learned form the Indian Ocean tsunami, the earthquakes in China, Haiti, Italy, the floods in Pakistan. How powerful a resource assembly of best practice documents or links this would be!

5. In My Daily Practice
I want to close my talk with a brief discussion of a new concept, which is perhaps a potentially useful addition to the ICOMOS toolkit. This is a tool which provides clear guidance for heritage place/site managers in day to day site management decisions. It’s a work in progress, so contributions are very welcome.

My daily work as a heritage consultant involves me in a diverse range of research, policy development, impact assessment, interpretation, advice and consultation.

However, our clients do not always see heritage conservation outcomes as their prime or even secondary obligation. Often they have purchased or inherited a responsibility for heritage place simply as an asset for which a new use is envisioned or required. Perhaps, interventions maybe needed to sustain a building in use (and therefore being maintained) and to provide necessary repair funds.
In the current economically turbulent atmosphere, generating good results for privately owned heritage places requires approaches and tools quite distinct from those we would use for a public building that is heritage listed.

5.1 MANAGING HERITAGE PLACES USING THE CONCEPT OF ‘TOLERANCE FOR CHANGE’

I believe that change in the historic environment is inevitable. It may be caused by natural processes, the wear and tear of use or social, economic and technological change. Managing change sustainably requires two basic skills: assessment and communication.

Every conservation decision should be based on an identification and assessment of its likely impact on the place’s significance embodied in the fabric or in less tangible attributes. Only through understanding the significance of a place is it possible to assess how the qualities that people value are vulnerable to harm or loss, in other words their sensitivity or “tolerance for change”. That understanding provides the basis for developing, implementing and communicating management strategies (including maintenance, cyclical renewal and repair) that will best sustain the heritage values of the place in its setting.

Assessing the sensitivity or Tolerance for Change (TFC) of heritage places is a concept which has been evolving in recent conservation management plans with which I have been involved. Perhaps this is the start of a new tool for the conservation tool kit?

It is based on understanding and retaining heritage significance. It explains conservation in “lay terms”, readily understandable to administrators, architects and owners alike (as well as heritage experts). Already, some of our government and corporate clients use this decision-making process in day-to-day heritage asset management. We’ve found that it can be especially useful for living, active sites where an understanding of the breadth of heritage significance, particularly the associative or intangible attributes, is needed to support and inform the ongoing physical asset management decisions from historic Defence establishments and private houses, to the world heritage listed Sydney Opera House.

TFC is based on the philosophical principles of the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter. It recognizes that heritage significance is a dynamic and diverse social construct, one which benefits from broad stakeholder engagement and regular review to be fully understood.

TFC is a way to better understand significance, by identifying what attributes of a place are sensitive to change, by analysing and prioritising the attributes of a heritage place that are significant.

This helps to define constraints and opportunities for each element to be managed. TFC integrates policy guidance for individual elements at a glance.

The TFC method seeks to provide a clear structural approach for evaluation of heritage significance by asset owners and communities, through:

a) understanding each attribute of significance by place and element; and

b) assessing how much it can change and presenting the outcome clearly.

In this way, decisions about change, new uses and conservation demands can be negotiated in relevant detail.

The TFC concept is currently being used in the revision of the Sydney Opera House (SOH) 2003 Conservation Plan (SOHCP).

5.2 THE SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE: OUV AND A PERFORMING MASTERPIECE

The SOH provides a useful case study in the potential application of the tolerance for change concept because its significance is not just as an architectural masterpiece. The 2006 World Heritage listing citation for the SOH recognised its extraordinary architectural and engineering achievements and its aesthetic qualities as an architectural masterpiece. A further key aspect of its significance is its functional authenticity as a performing arts centre.

“...The Sydney Opera House continues to perform its function as a world-class performing arts centre. The Conservation Plan specifies the need to balance the roles of the building as an architectural monument and as a state of the art performing centre, thus retaining its authenticity of use and function. Attention given to retaining the building's authenticity culminated with the Conservation Plan and the Utzon Design Principles...”
The nomination dossier recognised the special place that the SOH holds in the history of modern architecture and also its role as a mass cultural icon, both iconic and canonic, widely revered and “capturing the hearts and minds of everyone who experiences it”.

The SOH site is 5 acres, 1000+ rooms and 7 major performance venues, together with extensive retail and dining venues. The 440 staff welcome 7 million visitors every year; 1.2 million attend performances. This marvellous building has some acknowledged functional problems: the orchestra pits are inadequate; delivery facilities are dysfunctional, some acoustics are unsatisfactory and access for disabled patrons is poor. Resolving such weaknesses are long-term projects.

The day-to-day activities of Australia’s busiest performing arts centre require building asset management systems that are swiftly responsive to operational needs. However, the building fabric and forms in which these functions operate is of world, national and state heritage significance, and the conservation of these heritage values is therefore an asset management priority as well.

I am a government appointed member of the Sydney Opera House Conservation Council, and we are acutely aware of the risks of making cumulative small decisions under immediate operational pressures that may erode the overall heritage significance of the place—a simple methodology for assessing and avoiding adverse heritage impacts whilst responding quickly to the urgent needs of public performance venues is necessary.

On this matter, I must correct President Araoz a little. In his challenge paper he states that at the SOH, “local authorities insist that its values reside equally in the material aesthetic forms and the use of the place as a major performing arts centre. What this means is that the building’s interiors may be altered and changed in accordance with the conservation plan and the Utzon [Design] Principles, without any alteration to its overall significance as long as those changes respond to the demands imposed by the constantly evolving technology of musical and performing arts presentations.”

That is not an accurate representation of the facts—every proposed change is tested for its heritage impacts. Performance needs do not over-ride heritage requirements. All works are assessed using the standard Australian practice of Heritage Impact Assessment. What is different at the SOH is that part of the significance of the place is its performance role—its functional use is an attribute of its significance, just as much as its form, fabric and location and so the impacts on the whole range of attributes must be assessed and balanced.

In the revised Conservation Management Plan (CMP), all of the auditoria and internal spaces have been assessed for their significance within the broader context of the SOH significance, so they may not be altered without reference back to and testing against this significance, both at the macro (policy) and micro level. Like all CMPs the SOH plan (currently under review) includes policies to guide change and development at a macro level. At an operational level more detail is often needed.

Stepping through the TFC process can provide a micro level understanding for the building manager who needs to understand the significance of each element to consider how much change may be tolerated.

5.3 THE TOLERANCE FOR CHANGE PROCESS IN ACTION

The following description of the TFC process is an excerpt from standard conservation plans for which I have been responsible recently. The TFC process is a simple and effective four-step process—the first and last step will be familiar to most conservation practitioners, and the middle two steps offer a different methodology for approaching the management of change whilst retaining heritage significance. The term “element” is used for the separate parts of the place, and may be made up of a range of components.

Step 1 Why is the place significant? To what degree?
Understand and define the relative heritage significance of each element (exceptional, high, moderate, little or intrusive). Such gradings are based on an assessment of the integrity and authenticity of each element.

Step 2 What is significant about the place?
Identify and assess which of the attributes of the element contributes to its heritage significance and how that contribution is manifest. Usually it’s a combination of a number of attributes:
Understanding who values the place is always an important aspect of understanding heritage significance, for different communities will hold a variety of perspectives. In almost all places, significance will be embodied in a combination of physical attributes interpreted by community perspectives.

**Step 3 How much change can the significant attributes of the place tolerate?**

This step in the process calls for expert judgement about how much alteration can happen to those attributes without adverse impacts on significance, so that we can assess the degree of tolerance for change for each attribute (nil, moderate or high) of the element or its contribution to the site overall.

Sensitivity or tolerance for change may be ranked in words or numerically, 1 being the highest sensitivity and consequently the least tolerance for change. I prefer to use words consistently, rather than use numbers, which I find can be counterproductive.

Once again I must stress this is about tolerance in the sense of engineering tolerance: allowance: a permissible difference; allowing some freedom to move within limits.

**Step 4 Develop conservation management policies/plans**

Develop conservation management policies/plans that will provide operational guidance which avoids or minimises adverse heritage impacts on the significant attributes of each element.

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<th>Degree</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. No tolerance for change—highly sensitive</td>
<td>The key attributes (form, fabric, function, location, intangible values) contribute to the heritage significance of the element and/or its contribution to the significance of the site. The element retains a high degree of integrity and authenticity with only very minor alterations that respect or enhance its significance. The key attribute should be retained and conserved with no adverse impact on the assessed significance of the element or site.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Moderate tolerance for change</td>
<td>The key attributes (form, fabric, function, location or intangible values) partly contribute to the heritage significance of the element and/or its contribution to the site; it may have undergone some alteration/change which does not detract from its authenticity and significance. The key attributes of the element should be generally retained and conserved. Moderate change to specific attributes is possible provided there are only minimal adverse impacts and the assessed significance of the element or the site overall is retained.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. High tolerance for change—nil/low sensitivity</td>
<td>The key attributes (form, fabric, function, location or intangible values) of the element have relatively little individual heritage significance, but may contribute to the overall significance of the site. A greater level of change is possible to specific attributes of this element, avoiding adverse impacts and retaining the significance of the site overall.</td>
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The 2005 World Heritage Operational Guidelines refers to four tangible attributes of the “test of authenticity”: design, material, workmanship and setting, which have since been revised to include traditions, techniques, language and other forms of intangible heritage, as well as spirit and feeling or other issues. The tolerance for change approach reflects this expansion.

**5.4 SUMMARY**

In summary, the TFC methodology embodies two simple interrelated—but separate—assessment tools:
Tool 1: Evaluation of the specific attributes in which significance is embodied; and
Tool 2: Evaluation of the amount of change that each attribute may undergo, without loss of significance.
5.4.1 Tool 1: Evaluation of the specific attributes
Evaluation of the specific attributes of any site involves separately assessing the form, fabric, function, location and intangible values of the place. The rationale for breaking down cultural significance in this way is that these different values may have differing tolerance/sensitivity to change. Therefore, appropriate conservation policies may allow for a different quantum or type of change which may differ between the different attributes of the same place. (In other words, policies may allow for some aspects of a place to be changed a lot, while not allowing any change at all for another attribute of the same place/element).

5.4.2 Tool 2: Evaluation of the amount of change
Evaluation of the amount of change that an attribute can sustain without loss of significance involves a judgement that is separate from the evaluation of significance. (If this were not so, then the “tolerance for change” concept would not be needed—conservation policies could simply be directly related to significance levels alone). Some attributes of some heritage places can tolerate a “counter-intuitive” amount of change—i.e.: highly significant attributes of highly significant places may be able to accommodate a great amount of change, while conversely, attributes of low significance may not be able to be changed much at all without fundamental loss of significance.

The innovative aspect and indeed the whole point of the TFC methodology is that it allows for judgements of this kind to be uncoupled from the linear logic that usually links significance and change. It is not an endorsement of change without proper regard to heritage values.

6.0 Conclusions
This TFC addition to the heritage toolkit is evolving; it is being tested and changed project by project and as we share our practical experience with colleagues worldwide, seeking feedback and proposals for its critical adaptation- it is literally “a work in progress”. It can always be improved!

It is offered for open debate. I hope that ICOMOS members will take up the challenge of reviewing and evolving such tools for practical improvement as the monuments, sites and places we cherish undergo change and as our awareness and management of that change defines the continuity of the monument.

Global communications now offer ICOMOS members marvellous opportunities for collegiate exchange, assisting us to adapt and integrate such tools and methodologies into our own philosophy and practice and instantly share the experiences.

I believe that it is time for the Scientific Council to take the lead in re-focusing conservation practice in the light of the social, urban and communication changes of the first decade of the twenty first century. We need to develop new tools for heritage work and to engage new communities with heritage. As leaders in our profession we need to be part of the solution.

I look forward to the further deliberations of the Scientific Council and indeed all ICOMOS members on these issues.

7.0 Endnotes
1 Leo Schmidt 2008 Architectural Conservation: an Introduction, Wersthreuz Verlag Berlin p9
2 Robert Hewison1987 The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline
3 Leo Schmidt 2008 Architectural Conservation: An introduction, Berlin
4 National Trust UK 2004 History and Place
5 Getty Conservation Institute, SACH, 2002 Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China.
6 Christina Cameron 2009 Finding the Spirit of Place: A World Heritage Perspective in Turgeon, Laurier Spirit of Place: Between Tangible and Intangible Heritage Quebec
7 Via meetings and declarations such as those of Nara, 1994 and Yamoto. 2006
8 Andrzej Tomaszewski 2002 ICOMOS General Assembly Madrid Towards a Pluralistic Philosophy of Conservation
9 International Secretariat e-news, n°58, 26 August 2010
10 The Ethical Commitment Statement is to be reviewed by the ICOMOS Academy in 2010-11
12 Five yearly reviews of Conservation Plans are standard in Australia. The SOH CP review is being undertaken by Alan Croker of Design 5.
13 UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Decision 31COM 8B.31 OUV Statement for Sydney Opera House 2007
15 Integrity is a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the place and its attributes. Examining the conditions of integrity, therefore requires assessing the extent to which the property:
   a) includes all elements necessary to express its outstanding universal value;
b) is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes which convey the property's significance;

c) Suffers from adverse effects of development and/or neglect.

The physical fabric of the property and/or its significant features should be in good condition, and the impact of deterioration processes controlled. A significant proportion of the elements necessary to convey the totality of the heritage significance conveyed by the property should be included. Relationships and dynamic functions present in cultural landscapes, historic towns or other living properties essential to their distinctive character should also be maintained. Adapted from 2008 World Heritage Operational Guidelines.

In Australia, condition is a measure of the deterioration of a place or element, and thus its ability to survive into the future without remedial action being required. It should not be used interchangeably with integrity. Some structures have extraordinary authenticity and integrity, but may be in very poor condition.

16 Authenticity: Cultural heritage places may meet the conditions of authenticity if their cultural values are truthfully and credibly expressed through a variety of attributes such as form and design, materials and substance, traditions, techniques and management systems, location and setting, language and other forms of intangible heritage, spirit and feeling. A heritage item or conservation area is said to be authentic if there has not been adverse impact upon its fabric and the reasons for which it is considered significant. This may include impacts from conservation processes undertaken to better reveal or emphasise heritage significance. An authentic place is the honest product of its history and of historical processes. Adapted from 2008 World Heritage Operational Guidelines.